

Zimbabwe End of Chequered anti-Imperialist Era

Robert Mugabe stepped down as the president of Zimbabwe as the pressure mounted from the Army and Parliament. The immediate provocation was the dismissal of Mnangagwa, his second in command, and attempt to declare his wife Grace Mugabe as his successor. Emmerson Mnangagwa was sworn in as the president and he promised a future of freedom and prosperity. This change of leadership was celebrated among broad masses who had to bear nothing but hardships and brutal repression all these years. Will the downfall of Mugabe bring an improvement in their lives?

Zimbabwe was a British colony, then called as south Rhodesia. Mugabe came to power after 15 years of armed struggle against the British rule in 1980. As a part of Lancaster House agreement, elections were held in 1980 and Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) led by Mugabe won in the elections. On his part, Mugabe agreed to continue the policies that allowed MNCs to dominate and exploit Zimbabwe's mining and agricultural sectors.

The colonial rule designed the Zimbabwe's agriculture for export of crops like Maize, cotton, tea, sugar, tobacco, wheat and dairy and cattle farming. The mainstay of this policy was white settler farmers. They owned nearly 40 per cent of farm land and two thirds of the best land available. Two thirds of the black workers are engaged as wage earners.

The main demand of the liberation movement was the redistribution of land. At the time of coming to power, Mugabe agreed not to encroach upon the interests of white land owners for 10 years and then taking over the land on willing-buyer-willing-seller basis, while majority of people are aspiring for land.

Zimbabwe has also rich minerals: platinum, gold, iron ore, coal, and rare earths. Recently diamond mining was also taken up. The mining sector was dominated by MNCs. Mugabe kept this dominance undisturbed. So he was in the good books of British and US imperialists. Foreign aid and loans flowed smoothly.

This betrayal of black peoples aspirations led to unrest which Mugabe suppressed with iron hand and used inter-tribe conflicts, particularly Shona people and Ndebele people. He unleashed a genocide on non-shona people. He concentrated all the executive powers in him including dissolving of Parliament and declaring martial law.

By 1990 he was firmly saddled in the power. He took up the land distribution programme for 13 million acres owned by whites as prop to get elected. When pressure mounted from the imperialists, he declared that the courts will decide what "fair compensation" is. This land distribution is meant to benefit politicians, his party men, civil servants and members of armed forces. His land policy offered no genuine solution to social and economic problems faced by the rural poor.

Simultaneously he talked about nationalisation or indigenisation of mining industry. The finance capital got enraged. The IMF cut off funding and demanded opening up of Zimbabwean economy to foreign investment. Privatisation and unbridled exploitation as a part of structural adjustment programme.

This led to unrest among the people and there were general strikes in 1997 and 1999. Zimbabwe Council of Trade Unions (ZCTU) and Movement for Democracy (MDC) opposed Mugabe from the right forming alliance with white settlers with the slogan, "privatise and restore business confidence". MDC won elections in 2000.

Mugabe unleashed repression on MDC on one side and allowed limited land seizures as a facade to progressive action. But he did nothing to wage genuine offensive against the fiancé capital of imperialist countries.

The imperialist powers – US and British – imposed sever sanctions and are working for several years for the downfall of Mugabe. Mugabe adopted "look east" policy for foreign investment. Now China took this opportunity to fill void created by the sanctions. It started investing in the extraction of diamonds and other minerals.

The extraction of ores formed a nexus between the mining companies and army brass. Chinese companies invested billions of dollars and signed deals in energy and infrastructure projects. Mugabe stated that private

companies robbed Zimbabwe of its diamond wealth and he would nationalise mining. Zimbabwe produced 4.7 million carats in 2014. Mugabe took some steps that negatively impacted foreign investors.

The Zimbabwean army chief was in Beijing a week before the coup and held extensive talks with his Chinese counterparts. Mnangagwa after his dismissal took shelter in south Africa. The South African President Zuma asked Mugabe to facilitate peaceful transition. He also sent back Mnangagwa along with South African minister of defence and military veterans “to meet Mugabe and Zimbabwean defence forces”. It is clear that the army coup was very much pre-planned and is known to China and western imperialist powers well before it took place.

The downfall of Mugabe marks the end of last of the ‘liberators’ of Arica and end of anti-imperialist stance in Zimbabwe. Mnangagwa was the Chief of Internal Security under Mugabe and implemented Mugabe’s all the repressive policies. Hid government is not going to change the status quo, but rather strengthens it in Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe is in a precarious economic situation. Inflation has gone through roof. The imperialists depressed the prices of commodities that are being exported from Zimbabwe. Mnangagwa has no credible alternative than imposing more austerity measures dictated by the imperialist financial institutions.

The coup, for the time being, resolved the factional fighting within the ruling elite of Zimbabwe. It may give a short respite from repression for the people; but it is going to be increased many folds as the imperialist finance capital intensifies its exploitation of natural resources. It is upto the people of Zimbabwe to take their future into their hands.
